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## **BALKANS: DECISION ON ALBANIA-MACEDONIA CRUCIAL - MOGHERINI**

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Ansa Med (24 September 2019)

The decision to open EU accession talks with Albania and Macedonia "is crucial not only for both countries but for the entire region and the EU", said EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, according to the European External Action Service (EEAS). The statements were made at a traditional working dinner with Western Balkan leaders on the sidelines of the 74th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.

Mogherini and the heads of State and government of the Balkans also expressed support for the resumption of dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, expressing the hope that a "judicially binding agreement on the full normalization of relations" between the two countries can be reached, stressed EEAS.

During the meeting, all Balkan leaders reconfirmed their "strong engagement towards the European perspective" guaranteeing that "work on reforms and regional cooperation will continue".

The working dinner with Mogherini, local media in Belgrade reported, was attended by the foreign ministers of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ivica Dacic and Igor Crnadak, Macedonian Premier Zoran Zaev, Kosovo's President Hashim Thaci. Albanian Premier Edi Rama did not attend after he had to abruptly depart from the US due to a strong quake in Albania. Rama however decided on Monday to travel back to New York.

Mogherini, on behalf of the EU, is mediating in particular on dialogue on Kosovo between Belgrade and Pristina, blocked for nearly a year due to customs duties increased by 100% which are imposed by Kosovo on imports from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the new European Commission scheduled to take office on November 1, Mogherini will be replaced as EU foreign policy chief by Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell.

[http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2019/09/23/balkans-decision-on-albania-macedonia-crucial-mogherini\\_24692d68-e5bd-4fec-8239-f0378033a8cf.html](http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2019/09/23/balkans-decision-on-albania-macedonia-crucial-mogherini_24692d68-e5bd-4fec-8239-f0378033a8cf.html)